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# THE BATTLE OF GETTYSBURG: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

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by

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### **Disclaimer**

The views expressed in this academic research paper are those of the authors and do not reflect the official policy or position of the U.S. Government or the Department of Defense.

## **Preface**

This project developed from the belief that interactive computer presentations of a campaign provide an easier method to understand complex battles. The authors wish to thank Lieutenant Colonel Bert Frandsen for his enthusiastic encouragement in the completion of this project. The authors also wish to thank their families for their help, their patience, and most of all, for their continuous support.

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## **Abstract**

The purpose of this research project was to design an interactive computer ToolBook that illustrated and analyzed the Battle of Gettysburg. The ToolBook identifies the principal actors, the objectives they were trying to attain, what influenced their decisions, and examines the battle from both sides. It focuses on the movement and employment of infantry and cavalry troops and presents a pictorial of the changing battle. It analyzes the advantages, disadvantages, strengths and weaknesses of the opposing sides, and influence on command decisions. The analysis and conclusions address the outcome of the battle, alternatives available to the commanders, and lessons learned.

The ToolBook contains seven chapters entitled: Introduction, The Battle, Aftermath, Orders of Battle, Weapons, Northern Biographies, and Southern Biographies. The highlight of the ToolBook is a chronological depiction of the troop movements for each day of the battle and a panorama on the third day.

The ToolBook examines the influences of Dennis Hart Mahan and the concept of the decisive battle. Mahan derived his teachings from the works of the Swiss officer, Antoine Henri Jomini. The leaders of both the Northern and Southern armies and the overwhelming majority of their generals were graduates of the United States Military Academy, West Point. An overriding influence in their military education was the teachings of Dennis Hart Mahan, who taught for many years at West Point. A conclusion summarizes the authors' analysis of the influence of Dennis Hart Mahan on the decision makers at Gettysburg.

# THE BATTLE OF GETTYSBURG: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

## Overview of the Research Process

### Objectives

The purpose of this research project was to design an interactive computer ToolBook that illustrated and analyzed the Battle of Gettysburg. The ToolBook identifies the principal actors, the objectives they were trying to attain, what influenced their decisions, and examines the battle from both sides. It focuses on the movement and employment of infantry and cavalry troops and presents a pictorial of the changing battle, highlighting key or critical decisions and actions that influenced the outcome of the battle. It analyzes the advantages, disadvantages, strengths and weaknesses of the opposing sides, and influence on command decisions. The analysis and conclusions address the outcome of the battle, alternatives available to the commanders, and lessons learned.

### Methodology

The project was accomplished by researching several historical and military sources on the battle and determining the material required to present the Battle of Gettysburg in a ToolBook format. Key points in the battle were identified and each day of the battle was story-boarded to determine the best graphical representation for ToolBook

format. Additional information on unit composition and weapons was identified as required to facilitate a complete understanding of the battle as it developed. Conflicting data of historical facts was further researched to substantiate facts in other sources. All of the sources used are listed in the bibliography.

## **Procedures**

All of the pictorial information in the ToolBook was obtained from the Internet. The map layouts and the panorama of the third day of the battle were designed exclusively by Major Nielsen. Lieutenant Commander Lambert performed library research on specific points and the biographical sketches. Every attempt was made to develop a project that was free of bias and presented the viewer a clear understanding of the Battle of Gettysburg.

## **Reviewer**

The ToolBook was reviewed by Colonel John Warden, Commandant of ACSC. His response was a very enthusiastic endorsement. His suggestions were incorporated in the ToolBook.

## **Contribution**

The ToolBook examines the influences of Dennis Hart Mahan and the concept of the decisive battle. Mahan derived his teachings from the works of the Swiss officer, Antoine Henri Jomini. The leaders of both the Northern and Southern armies and the overwhelming majority of their generals were graduates of the United States Military Academy, West Point. An overriding influence in their military education at West Point

was the teachings of Dennis Hart Mahan. The authors analyze the influence of Dennis Hart Mahan on the decision makers at Gettysburg.

This ToolBook has the potential for integration into future ACSC curriculum and for export to other institutions.



## **Executive Summary of ToolBook**

### **Introduction**

The introduction of the ToolBook discusses the state of the Civil War in the spring of 1863 and introduces the leaders of the Northern Army of the Potomac and the Southern Army of Northern Virginia. This section gives the viewer a perspective of the objectives the leaders of the Northern and Southern armies were trying to attain. The leadership training section discusses the training military officers received at the United States Military Academy, West Point and specifically the influence of Dennis Hart Mahan.

### **The Battle**

This chapter is the highlight of the ToolBook and provides an illustrated, computerized perspective on the chronological movement of each day of the battle. This chapter begins with the first day (June 30), and continues to the end of the campaign (July 4-11, 1863). A brief narrative of the highlights of each day's events is followed by a map depicting the movements of the armies. This chapter gives the viewer a clear understanding of troop movements during the three-day battle and a panorama of the climactic attack on the third and final day of battle.

### **Aftermath**

This chapter discusses the aftermath of the battle, and its effect on each of the armies and the outcome of the war. A conclusion summarizes the authors' analysis of the influence of Dennis Hart Mahan on the decision makers at Gettysburg.

## **Orders of Battle**

The Orders of Battle chapter explains the unit sizes normally used in the Civil War and the composition of the units that comprised the armies. The section on the composition of the units was added to facilitate the viewer's understanding on the organization of units during the Civil War. This section is followed by a description of infantry, cavalry, and artillery units. The chapter concludes with a complete orders of battle for both armies identifying corps, division, and brigade commanders.

## **Weapons**

The Weapons chapter gives the viewer a detailed description of the infantry and artillery tactics and weapons that were used during the Civil War and prominent in the Battle of Gettysburg. This chapter was designed after Colonel Warden reviewed the ToolBook. He suggested a section that explained the types of weapons used would facilitate a better understanding of the battle. The infantry section discusses the usage of mass formations, the customary Civil War infantry attack, and the technology and techniques employed by the rifle-musket. The artillery section discusses the ranges, composition, and employment of the four types of artillery used at Gettysburg.

## **Northern Biographies**

This chapter contains ten biographies of key leaders in the Army of the Potomac who impacted the outcome of the battle. Each biography contains a picture of the individual taken during the Civil War. The research examined individual military training. Each biography contains a synopsis of military and civilian accomplishments.

## **Southern Biographies**

This chapter contains eight biographies of key leaders in the Army of Northern Virginia who impacted the outcome of the battle. Each biography contains a picture of the individual taken during the Civil War. The research examined individual military training. Each biography contains a synopsis of military and civilian accomplishments.

## **Summary of Findings**

As development of the ToolBook progressed, the researchers began to focus on the military training of the decision makers at Gettysburg. The biographical research found that fifteen of the sixteen key leaders had attended the United States Military Academy, West Point. The question then was, what or who, had influenced their tactical military training. Further research found that this point had been debated for several years. The controversy had centered on which was greater the influence of the Swiss officer, Jomini, or Dennis Hart Mahan. After much research, the authors focused on the influence of Mahan, who taught at West Point for many years.

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